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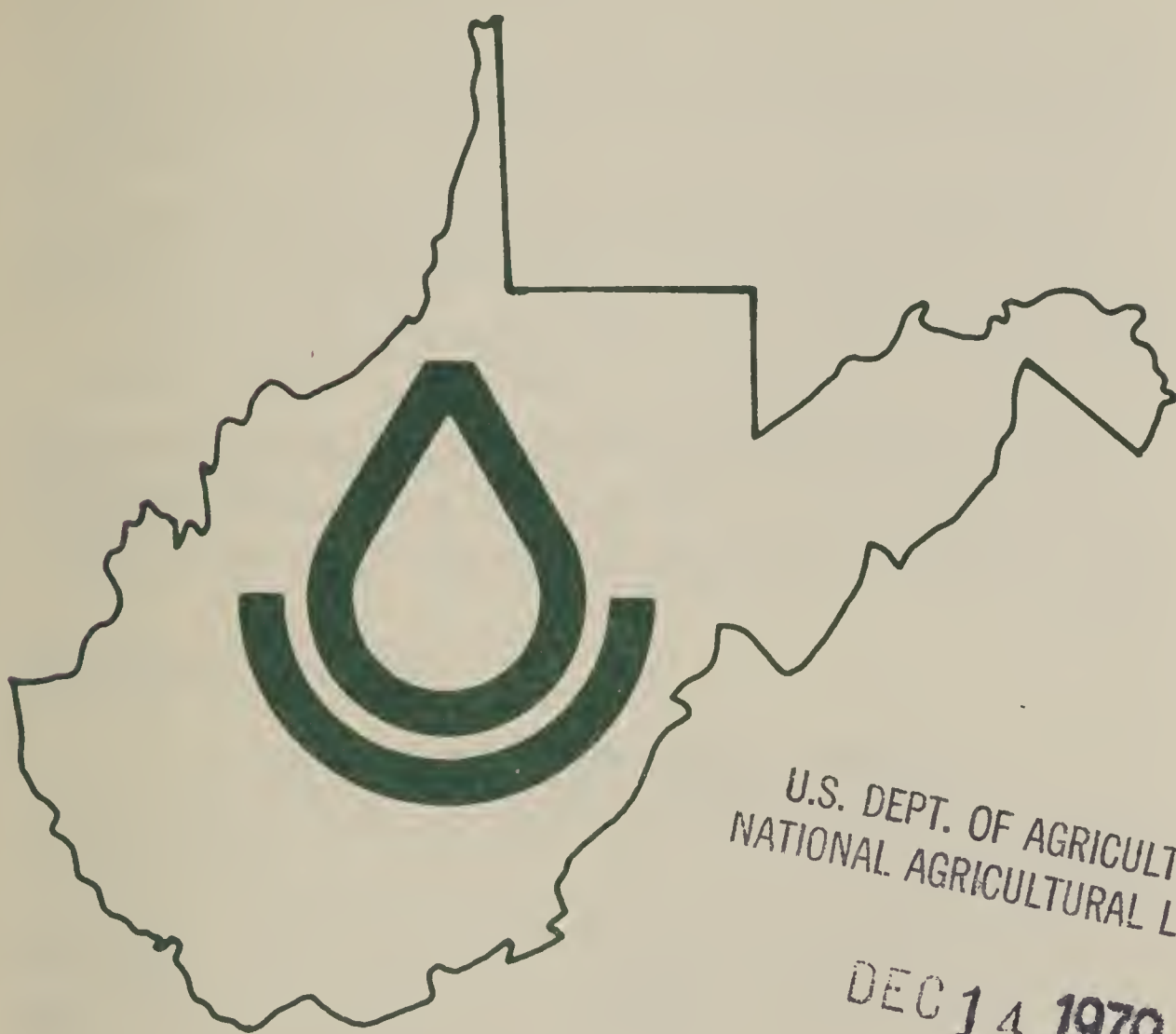


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West Virginia's

# LAND RESOURCES

1977 National Resource Inventories



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U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Soil Conservation Service  
Morgantown, West Virginia  
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# Land Use

West Virginia land being used to produce crops and hay decreased by 111,930 acres from 1967-77, to a total in 1977 of 994,000 acres. That represented 7.3 percent of the state's rural, nonfederal land in use for crop and hay production. The major decrease in the 10-year period was in land rotated in use between hay or pasture and other crops. However, the 1977 inventories showed increases in acres planted in row and close-grown crops and in land used solely to produce hay.


The land used for pasture increased by about 202,000 acres between 1967 and 1977. The 1977 total of 2,039,000 acres is 15 percent of the inventoried land in the state.

Forests occupy 72 percent of the land inventoried, or a total of 9,805,000 acres. That reflects a 6 percent decrease in forest land during the 1967-77 period.

Only 5.7 percent (772,000 acres) of the state's rural, nonfederal land is in other uses such as farmsteads and commercial feedlots, according to the 1977 inventories.

## LAND USE COMPARISON

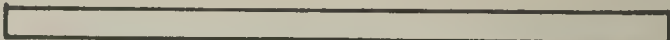

### CROPLAND

|                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 1,105,930 acres |  | 1967  |
| 994,000 acres   |  | 1977  |



### PASTURE

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1,836,993 acres |  |
| 2,039,000 acres |  |

### FOREST

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 10,429,867 acres |  |
| 9,805,000 acres  |  |

### OTHER LAND

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 565,818 acres |  |
| 772,000 acres |  |

Nearly 77 percent of the state's rural, nonfederal land is in need of some form of conservation treatment, according to the 1977 inventories. Treatment generally is designed to improve or maintain cover, reduce erosion, or improve fertility of the land.

Of West Virginia's 994,000 acres of cropland, approximately one-half was found to be in need of some form of treatment. Much progress has been made in treating cropland since 1967, when more than two-thirds needed some form of treatment.

Little change was reported in conservation needs for pastureland, with nearly all of the state's 2,039,000 acres in need of some form of treatment. Only 6 percent was found to be treated adequately.

Of the state's forest land, 76 percent is in need of some form of treatment, while 2,339,000 acres are adequately treated.

## Erosion Rates

The 1977 inventories presented estimates of soil loss caused by *sheet and rill* erosion (the gradual and uniform removal of soil from the surface and from channels less than one foot deep). As might be expected, the findings for West Virginia show that native pasture lands and grazed forest lands are eroding at the highest rates. Occasionally improved pasture land shows an erosion rate of about one-half that for native pasture land, while forest land not grazed has a rate of one-fourth that for grazed forest land. Cultivated areas are eroding about twice as fast as the average for all cropland (including land used for hay production). Construction-site, gully, and streambank and roadbank erosion and sedimentation will be studied under the second and third phases of the inventories, which will be completed in 1980.



## Other Findings

**Prime Farmland**—West Virginia has 508,000 acres of prime farmland. About 56 percent of this is used for crop production, 20 percent for pasture, and 17 percent for forests. The remainder is in other uses.

**Potential for New Cropland**—A total of 73,000 acres in the state have a high potential for conversion to cropland use, and 390,000 have a medium potential for conversion.

**Irrigated Lands**—In 1977, the state showed approximately 10,000 acres of irrigated land. In 1967, the total was too insignificant to count.

**Small Water Areas**—West Virginia has 78,000 acres of small water areas, including 20,689 water bodies smaller than 40 acres in size and 57 streams less than 1/8 of a mile wide. These areas are primarily used for recreation and fish and wildlife habitat.

**Flood Prone Areas**—Approximately 3.5 percent (482,000 acres) of the nonfederal land in West Virginia is described as flood-prone. Nearly one-half of this land is used for cropland.

**Wetland Areas**—West Virginia has 16,000 acres classified as wetland (types 3 to 8) areas. Approximately one-half is in use for forest land and cropland, with the remainder in other uses.

### For More Information

For more information about West Virginia's rural, nonfederal lands, contact your county Soil Conservation Service office or:

Soil Conservation Service  
State Office  
75 High Street, Room 301  
Morgantown, WV 26505



## **National Resource Inventories**

The information in this brochure was obtained from Phase One of the National Resource Inventories conducted by the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The data reported in Phase One of the inventories was collected in 1977, and represents the most accurate, up-to-date, and complete collection of information of this type available. This information will be valuable in designing local, state, and national conservation programs, and in fulfilling the need for reliable data about resource trends and conditions.

The inventories include a wealth of information about such topics as land use, soil quality, conservation needs, sheet and rill erosion, prime farmlands, potential for new cropland, irrigated land, small water areas, flood prone areas, and wetlands. More data about erosion rates will be made available with completion of Phases Two and Three of the National Resource Inventories in 1980.

The 1977 inventories point to several significant trends and situations which are important on both the state and national levels. This brochure outlines some of the highlights of the West Virginia findings.



# Land Quality

In the 1977 inventories, the Soil Conservation Service looked at the quality of West Virginia's lands, placing all acreage in eight standard land capability classifications. The findings were virtually unchanged from those reported in 1967. Following is each land capability classification, the number of acres, a definition of the class, and the percentages of land in the class used for crops, pasture, and forests. (Remaining land is in other uses.)

## Suitable for Tillage

CLASS I—43,000 Acres—Land with few limitations that restrict its use. (Cropland, 81 percent; pasture, 19 percent.)

CLASS II—868,000 acres—Land with some limitations which reduce the choice of plants or require moderate conservation practices. (Cropland, 45 percent; pasture, 24 percent; forest, 24 percent.)

CLASS III—1,031,000 acres—Land with very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants and/or require special conservation practices. (Cropland, 25 percent; pasture, 31 percent; forest, 40 percent.)

CLASS IV—1,329,000 acres—Land with very severe limitations that restrict the choice of plants and/or require very careful management. (Cropland, 15 percent; pasture, 18 percent; forest, 55 percent.)

## Not Suitable for Tillage:

CLASS V—33,000 acres—Land with little or no erosion hazard but which has other limitations which limit its use to pasture, woodland, wildlife food and cover. (Pasture, 57 percent; forest, 42 percent.)

CLASS VI—2,022,000 acres—Land with severe limitations that largely restrict its use to pasture, woodland, wildlife food and cover. (Cropland, 5 percent; pasture, 20 percent; forest, 72 percent.)

CLASS VII & VIII—8,284,000 acres—Land with very severe limitations which restrict its use to grazing, woodland, wildlife, water supply, recreation, or esthetic purposes. (Pasture, 9 percent; forest, 84 percent.)

